

At the Feb 8th GMM more than 70 members from across all three Units passed the following motion very nearly unanimously (zero against, two abstentions):

Whereas the Employer has failed to substantively address CUPE 3903s concerns as represented in our bargaining proposals; And whereas the University has instead tabled concessions; Be it resolved that CUPE 3903 is committed to the following principles in this round of negotiations:

- Affordable graduate education (e.g. post-residency fees; international student fees)
- Parity between Bargaining Units (e.g. Unit 3 minimum funding guarantee; qualifications for all hires)
- Protection of funding packages (e.g. offset/clawback language; replacement work)
- Continuing appointments (e.g. LSTAs; conversions; minimum entitlement)

This show of strength and solidarity did not go unnoticed. Two days after our GMM, the Employer dropped a number of its concessionary offers. Specifically, the Employer removed

- its concessionary proposals in the areas of “technology and instruction” (their intent was to strike existing language that protects you from having to use unnecessary teaching technologies)
- “Lecturer Excludes” (their proposal was to remove these positions from Unit 2 Collective Agreement),
- “informal evaluations” (a proposed increase from one per term to one per course)
- “formal evaluations” (arbitrary triggers for formal evaluations; for some Unit 2 members this would have meant potentially 11 evaluations per year)
- “postings” (use of technology e.g. Moodle - as a qualification for hiring)
- “Summer Teaching Assistantships” (removal of limit on number of summer TAships any individual may be forced to do) and
- “Foundations Course Design” (striking language laying out how much members would be paid to design a foundations course).

Also on February 8th, **members directed the Bargaining Team to bring to the table a reduced proposal package.** This package was delivered to the employer on February 10th.



In response, the Employer then clarified its position on “tuition indexation” and “fund protection” – two further areas of contention – tabling proposals which, in the case of the former, made clear that they do not intend to formally change the program (see below), and in the latter, codifies 2008 as the base year upon which all indexation will take place.

While this is a move in the right direction, **CONCESSIONS REMAIN ON THE TABLE**. For instance,

- **the Employer has refused to move on its proposal to introduce “sign-back deadlines”** on contract offers for Units 1 & 3 (10 days for Unit 1; five days for Unit 3). Such deadlines are a not-so-subtle attempt to place the blame on us for the fact that they were late with September pay for 1,400 of members / 1,800 contracts (despite the fact many of these contracts were signed in June and July!), while introducing arbitrary timelines which, if not met by members for whatever reason (e.g., late mail, change of address, research leave), could lead to the loss of funding.
- In addition, the Employer continues to hold strong on its proposal to increase the number of Unit 1 Course Directorships from 45 to 100. This is but the latest move to **download teaching responsibilities onto graduate students while attacking tenure and taking work away from contract faculty members**.
- Finally, in consulting with members from various departments across Keele campus, the Executive has discovered that in many cases the **Tuition Rebates** (the \$590 (domestic) / \$715 (international) that graduate students receive for each term in which you pay tuition, which the Employer calls “Graduate Financial Assistance”) **are now being included within your funding packages transforming your minimum guarantee into a de facto maximum funding package**. While not a formal concession, this represents a serious attack on graduate funding at York (worth \$1770 or \$2145 per member) and must be dealt with at the table.

More generally, **we have now been negotiating for almost four months and have only come to agreement on 34 items** (roughly ten per unit), most of which have been inconsequential (e.g., who will print the Collective Agreements). Worse yet, **the Employer has made only six counter-proposals to our original package** (a 1% wage offer, four employment equity provisions, and two proposals around unpaid sick leave for Unit 3). And, while we have discussed at length our key proposal areas (as



outlined above), we still have no agreement in principle on any of these issues. Rather, the Employer's stance remains unchanged: reduce your demands to fit within our financial mandate and maybe then we can talk on some of these issues.

Unfortunately, **this so-called financial mandate is itself a concessionary offer**. Indeed, they have consistently intimated that we must accept a 2% per year total compensation package (1% of which would be wages, leaving only 1% for everything else listed above) all the while knowing that historically we have come to agreements in the range 5% per year (sometimes more).

For all of these reasons, on February 15th the Executive and Bargaining Team served notice to the Employer that the union is filing for conciliation with the Ministry of Labour.

What does this mean exactly? Two things:

- First, for two weeks starting the week of February 27 a **government-appointed conciliator will attempt to enable the two sides reach an agreement**
- Second, this is **the first step towards putting the union in a legal strike position.**

Both the Executive and the Bargaining Team hope that through conciliation, we will be able to reach a tentative agreement for ratification by the membership.

However, given the Employer's reluctance to recognize our members' needs and their unwillingness to bargain on a proposal-by-proposal basis thus far, **the Union has no choice but to begin preparations to hold a strike mandate vote and set a bargaining deadline. Without this leverage, we are concerned that the Employer will continue to stall through conciliation**, talking in circles while our contracts continue to be eroded by inflation.

Having a strike mandate vote does not mean that the Union is going on strike, nor does it interrupt or derail conciliation. On the contrary, should conciliation fail, a successful strike mandate vote allows the Executive and Bargaining team to further demonstrate to the Employer that the membership is committed to getting a fair and reasonable Collective Agreement through REAL and substantial negotiation at the table. **Historically, a strong strike mandate vote has allowed the Union to avert a strike and has been the key to our achieving fair settlements.**



The Executive and Bargaining Team need to discuss these matters with you. As such, we have planned **three membership meetings in the coming weeks:**

Thursday March 1 from **4-7pm** in **TEL 0001** (not to be confused with TEL001. We are in the room with three 0s). This is a regular General Membership Meeting (GMM), so there will be union business items discussed, followed by time devoted to bargaining updates (e.g. the status of conciliation) and related discussion

Friday March 9 from **2.30 to 5.30 pm** in the **Lassonde Building (LAS) in room C** (note this building used to be the Chemistry Science & Engineering Building [CSE]). This is a Special GMM - "Special" meaning there is only one thing on the agenda - dedicated solely to a discussion of a strike vote

Monday March 12 from **10am to 1pm** in the **Renaissance Room in Vanier's Office of the Master**. Again this is an SGMM dedicated solely to a discussion of a strike vote

Also, the Executive and Bargaining Team are **meeting with members of all units at departmental consultations...** we **have visited 25+ departments over the past five weeks but need to visit everyone** and are **definitely available for another visit** if your department wants it. To arrange, please email Sidrah Laldin, Chief Steward Unit 3 at cupe3903chiefsteward3@members.cupe.ca - provide a date/time that works for your department to have a consult and Sidrah will book an Executive / Bargaining Team member. Hope to see and talk to you soon.

What else do we need? **Members' involvement.** We need to poster, to do tabling, to engage undergraduate students regarding how the shifts in post-secondary education are ripping them off too... for more information about being involved with communications, contact Claire Major at cupe3903communicationsofficer@members.cupe.ca and for how to engage with actions and planning, contact Sarah Hornstein at Cupe3903chiefsteward2@members.cupe.ca

